

MINUTES

MANSFIELD ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN
Wednesday, June 28, 2006
Mansfield Town Hall, Conference Room C
6:30-8:30 PM

PRESENT: K. Grunwald (staff), S. Baxter (staff), L. Bailey (staff), M.J. Newman, N. Hovorka, J. Goldman, B. Lehmann, R. Leclerc (staff), M. Dickson, P. Wheeler, S. Patwa, K. Paulhus

REGRETS: J. Buck (Chair), A. Bloom, S. Daley, A. Bladen, B. Maines, D. McLaughlin, K. Vallo

I. INTRODUCTIONS/MINUTES:

A. Introductions

- B. Adoption of minutes of May 31, 2006: The minutes of the May 31 meeting were reviewed. S. Baxter pointed out that under "Communications" (pg. 2, para. 3) it should be corrected that the Town notifies the State of space assignment as part of our grant application in May. Changes in slot allocations need to be requested from SDE. B. Lehmann pointed out that the program year for School Readiness starts in July; not September as indicated. L. Bailey questioned the statement under "communications" that last year all slots were assigned to one Center because of lack of interest from other Centers. S. Baxter and M. J. Newman clarified that this is how the process actually developed. Suggested that the statement should be changed to "presumed lack of interest in the two-week period for application." S. Baxter added that Ande Bloom is a registered dietitian and a registered nutritionist. On page 4 it should be noted that J. Goldman reported that Northwood Apartments. B. Lehmann noted some typographical errors to be corrected. The minutes were accepted with these corrections.

II. COMMUNICATIONS (Consent Agenda, unless otherwise noted)

- A. A Matrix of Parent Opportunities And Community Responsibilities: The matrix that was sent out was provided by Graustein as a model to involve parents in the work of this collaborative, starting with knowledge and information. M.J. Newman is involved with a leadership course that will be starting in this area, and she suggested recruiting parents as leaders for this course. This model offers both childcare and food. S.

Baxter supported the notion of including parents in any leadership development program that is offered. S. Patwas suggested the possibility of offering this through the local schools to encourage parent involvement in the PTO's. S. Baxter will invite the head of the CT Parent Power network to come to one of these meetings.

III. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Small Group Break-Out Sessions: Reports from previous meeting Northwood Apartments Outreach Group-July 29th Event: S. Baxter reported that two graduate students are working there as "Community Assistants." Their first activity will be a pot-luck on July 29; feeling that there should be representatives of MAC there. Ideas: reading time/book give-away, information table (MAC, school system, etc.), arts and crafts table, parachute activity (need 4 adults). The goal is to have a presence at the event and establish a connection with families in that apartment complex, also learn more about the needs of this community. Need to figure out the age group for a book give-away. RIF and Altrusa were suggested as possible funding sources. L. Bailey reported that the library has good suggestions for sources of board books for young children. There was also some discussion about how the library can and does bring books into the community. The apartment manager is trying to get demographic information on current tenants. Over time there will need to be coordination with the library and the school system. There was also discussion about coordinating an activity with the Asian grocery van that comes to the complex. The focus is to introduce this group to that community. J. Goldman added that this group can become a resource to the Community Assistants.

Kindergarten Forum: K. Grunwald reported that the group questioned whether or not there is a community-wide level of interest in a forum like this. A more appropriate forum may be the Board of Education or each school's PTO's. The suggestion was to create a brief survey to be sent to pre-school, kindergarten and first-grade parents.

Week of the Young Child and Library Fun Fair: L. Bailey reported on suggestions for an open-house day for childcare Centers and homecare providers. Library could help with promotion, and suggested using the Town van to visit providers. Individual invitations could be sent to elected officials to attend. The library could help with signage and develop a map identifying locations, and a display in the library, with supporting literature and parenting/parent activity books. Doctor's offices and public access television could be used to promote this event. The library could offer a

special program for young children during this week as well. Another idea is a “share night” to provide a place for providers to bring their favorite child activity to share with others. Look for an organization to sponsor a dinner to lead into this. They also discussed having someone go on Wayne Norman’s show or other public access media. Another idea is to chronicle a week in a young child’s life in Mansfield.

IV. PROGRAM UPDATES

A. School Readiness Grant

Special Task Force meeting: This group will attempt to meet on July 26 to begin working on policy issues.

- Space allocations
-

Part time space shared with Willow House: Child Development Labs has given up one space (PT) to Willow House.

B. Discovery

School Readiness Parent Involvement: S. Baxter is going to attempt to meet with all parents of School Readiness children and try to find out what their interests are and involve them in early childhood activities. Some concern was raised about identifying families as “school readiness”; feeling that they need to be part of a larger group. The suggestion was to present these opportunities to parents in such a way that they don’t feel “singled-out” or identified (individual basis or all-inclusive).

- Brainstorming for Fun Family Events

V. OLD BUSINESS

“Other”: Dr. Raouf Mama will be doing an event at the library, and this will be open to all childcare workers.

P. Wheeler announced that we have purchased training videos for early care staff for professional development. Question raised as to whether or not they would be made available to parents as well. S. Baxter felt that the priority should be for staff opportunities for professional development. Suggestion that Sandy may want to keep the videos and control access. It was decided that they will be made available through Sandy’s office for three to six months for childcare professionals, and after that time they can be made available for general distribution through the library. A letter will be sent out to childcare professionals informing them that they are available. R. Leclerc offered to help

with distribution to preschool staff in the public school system. A critique sheet will be distributed as well.

B. Lehmann mentioned that she attended a Mansfield LWV board meeting, and they are investigating a candidates forum as a format, and they would like to partner with other organizations. The question is whether or not MAC would like to join with the League in this. If so, Becky will have someone from the League get in touch with Sandy to discuss this. The general feeling was that this would be a good activity for MAC to affiliate with.

VI. Next Meeting(s)- No July Meeting, August 23, Wednesday

- Meetings are held from 6:30- 8:30 PM at a location to be determined. Additional meetings may be scheduled as needed, or removed as not needed.

VII. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.

The next meeting will be on August 23 at 6:30, Conference Rm C .

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Grunwald